**HALLOWEEN COMES TO AMERICA**

Traditional Halloween symbols (witches, black cats, pumpkins, candles, masks, parties and pranks) appeared in the U.S. during the late 1800’s. In 1848, millions of Irish emigrants poured into America as a result of the potato famine. With this poured into America as a result of the potato famine. With this sudden influx of people, the holiday of Druidism found its new home on alien shores. “Proudly Celtic, they called Halloween Odiche Shamhna (‘Night of Samhain), as their ancestors had, and kept the traditional observances” [Common Boundary, Sep./Oct. 1993, p. 31]

C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0305493.wmf

The Jack-o-lantern is the festival light for Halloween and is

the ancient symbol of a damned soul. Originally the Irish would

carve out turnips or beets as lanterns as representations of the

souls of the dead or goblins freed from the dead.

When the Irish emigrated to America they could not find many turnips to carve into Jack O’Lanterns but they did find and abundance of pumpkins. Pumpkins have been an essential part of Halloween celebrations ever since.



Pumpkins were cut with faces representing demons and was

originally intended to frighten away evil spirits. It was said that if a

demon or such were to encounter something as fiendish looking as themselves that they’d run away in terror, thus sparing the houses dwellers

from the ravages of dark entities. They would have carried around the village boundaries or left outside the home to burn through the night.

Bats, owls and other nocturnal animals, also popular symbols of Halloween, were originally feared because people believed that these creatures could communicate with the spirits of the dead.



Black cats have religious origins as well. Black cats have

religious origins as well. Black cats were considered to be \ reincarnated beings with the ability to divine the future. During the Middle Middle Ages it was believed that witches could turn themselves into black cats. Thus when such a cat was seen, it was considered to be a witch in disguise.

**Trick-or-Treat?**

C:\Users\Faculty\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\2MKOUV1T\MC900410573[1].wmf

Some trace the origins of present day “trick-or-treat” to

Samhain, which was the supreme night of demonic jubilation.

Spirits of the dead would rise out of their graves and wand the countryside, trying to return to the homes where they formerly lived. Frightened villagers tried to appease these wandering spirits by offering them gifts of fruit and nuts. They began the tradition of placing plates of the fines food and bits of treats that the household had to offer on their doorsteps, as gifts, to appease the hunger of the ghostly wanderers. If not placated, villagers feared that the spirits would kill their flocks or destroy their property.

The problem was… if the souls of dead loved ones could return that night, so could anything else, human or not, nice or not-so-nice. The only thing the superstitious people knew to do to protect themselves on such an occasion was to masquerade as one of the demonic hoard, and hopefully blend in unnoticed among them. Wearing masks and other disguises and blackening the face with soot were originally ways of hiding oneself from the spirits of the dead who might be roaming around. This is the origin of Halloween masquerading as devils, imps, ogres and other demonic creatures.

Others trace “trick-or-treat” to a European custom called “souling”. Beggars would go from village to village begging for “soul cakes” made out of square pieces of bread with currants. The more soul cakes the beggars would receive, the more prayers they would promise to say on behalf of the dead relatives of the donors. At the time it was believed that the dead remained in limbo for a time after death, and that prayer, even by strangers could guarantee a soul’s passage to heaven.

In many parts of Britain and Ireland this night used to be known as ‘Mischief Night’, which meant that people were free to go around the village playing pranks and getting up to any kind of mischief without fear of getting punished. Many of the different customs were taken to the United States by the Irish and Scottish immigrants in the nineteenth century, and they developed into ‘trick or treat”.